

A Plus For CIA

Reviewed by Jay Mallin

CIA Diary is a valuable book — perhaps not in the manner it was meant to be, but nonetheless a valuable book. Agee's stated reason for writing the book is that "a book describing CIA operations might help to illustrate the principles of foreign policy that got us into Vietnam and may well get us into similar situations." Also: "A book on the CIA could illustrate how the interests of the privileged minorities in poor countries lead back to, and are identified with, the interests of the rich and powerful who control the U.S."

This is the expectable rationale of a former CIA agent who writes an "inside the company" book about the CIA because he now feels that "national security for me lies in socialism, not in protection of CIA operations and agents."

Thus the rationale offered by Philip Agee. Perhaps he has achieved his aim — certainly the book offers ample fodder for leftwing propagandists who are ideologically committed to assailing any activity by the U.S. government, at home or abroad. But this reader comes away from the book with impressions entirely different than what Agee says he desires to create.

Impression one on the reviewer: This book is a marvelous textbook on the conduct of intelligence operations abroad. No James Bond here but rather difficult and patient work by teams of operatives.

Impression two: The CIA is very good at carrying out its objectives, objectives which are the same for all intelligence agencies: to further the national policies of their respective governments.

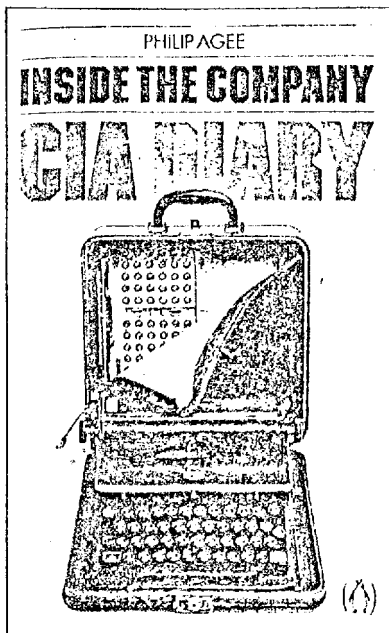
Agee, just out of college, joined the CIA in 1957. He describes his recruitment, the structure of the CIA (there is also an organizational chart at the back of the book) and his training. Here is what Agee says about training for infiltration into Communist countries:

The need for getting agents into denied areas like certain parts of the Soviet Union, China and other communist countries, is satisfied in part by illegal infiltration by land, sea or air. The agents, usually natives of the denied area, are given proper clothing, documentation and cover stories and, if infiltrating by land, may be required to pass secretly through heavily guarded borders. Training in border crossing is given in a restricted area of Camp Peary (the CIA's training establishment) where a mile or so of simulated communist borders is operated with fences, watch-towers, dogs, alarms and patrols. Maritime

infiltration involves the use of a mother ship, usually a freighter operated by an agency cover shipping company which approaches to within a few miles of the shore landing-site. An intermediate craft, often a souped-up outboard, leaves the mother ship and approaches to perhaps a mile off the shore where a rubber boat with a small silent outboard is inflated to carry the infiltration team to the beach . . . Infiltration by air requires black overflights for which the Agency has un-

INSIDE THE COMPANY: CIA DIARY by Philip Agee; Penguin Books, London, 1975

Intelligence work is not just adventure. it's not some kind of stunt, it's not gay trips abroad.
 — Rudolf Abel



marked long- and short-range aircraft including the versatile Helio Courier that can be used in infil-exfil operations with landings as well as parachute drops . . .

His training completed, Agee served successively in Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico (in addition to stints in Washington). The intricacies of politics in those countries are of little interest except to students of Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico, particularly since some of the narrative concerns events that took place a decade or more ago.

These events, however, do serve as necessary backdrops to the detailed history Agee provides of CIA operations in these countries. One becomes truly impressed with the extent of CIA penetration of governments and of Communist apparatuses. In the case of governments, this penetration ranged from CIA agents working closely with government and police officials to placing officials actually on the CIA payroll.

Penetration of Communist apparatuses is, of course, a primary goal of the CIA anywhere abroad, just as it is a basic goal of the KGB, GRU, DGI and other Communist intel services to penetrate the CIA (Was Philip Agee one of their successes?). The CIA goes to painstaking lengths to obtain information from within Communist apparatus, by penetrating (recruiting a defector), intercepting mail, tapping phones or placing bugs. Agee relates that the CIA photographed electrical sockets in the conference room at Communist Party headquarters in Montevideo. These photographs together with duplicate sockets were sent to Washington so that identical sockets could be made which would each contain concealed "bugs." These were to be used to replace the existing sockets in the conference room so that the CIA could bug the room. Why the photographs? So that even drops of paint on the sockets could be duplicated.

Agee served in the CIA until 1969, resigning during his tour of duty in Mexico. He mentions a "serious and deepening relationship" with a leftist woman, although he was married and the father of children. He also mentions that he had been "regularly meeting" two Soviet intel and other Communist agents, with the full approval of the CIA which presumably hoped Agee would get one or more to defect (Did they instead turn the tables?). And of course the inevitable ideological rationale: ". . . My fuller comprehension of the class divisions of capitalist society based on property or the lack of it."

The book has the ring of authenticity about it in its descriptions of CIA operations, and it is therefore of value to anyone interested in how a major intel organization carries out its responsibilities. But in regard to Agee himself, the book raises more questions than it answers. A congressman has publicly said that Agee was a "defector to the Communist cause." Agee seems to support this statement, particularly since he admittedly received assistance from leftists and leftist organizations. Agee even travelled to Havana for "research" purposes.

Things are, however, not always what they seem to be in the gray world of intelligence operations. So two other

possibilities should be considered.

One: That Agee was a Communist agent all along, a successful penetration from the beginning. The book runs to over 600 pages and, written in almost-daily diary style, contains a wealth of information. Agee says he did considerable research after his tenure with the CIA, but no amount of research in the Biblioteca Nacional in Havana, the British Museum and other libraries is going to produce the detailed "inside" information that characterizes this book. Clearly Agee — contrary to basic intel rules — was keeping copious notes and copies of documents. Why did he do so?

Two: That Agee is playing the most dangerous game of all: that of a double agent. True he reveals CIA operations. True he reveals the names of agents (Could there really have been an agent named "Alexander Zeffer"?). But isn't it

likely that Soviet intelligence eventually became fully cognizant of all this information? Lord Radcliffe, reporting on British security, stated bluntly, "The Government's secrets are quite often ephemeral." At any rate, in any double-agent case the "defector" must always give away some information in order to prove his sincerity. In regard to one of his trips to Cuba Agee admits plaintively, "For reasons I fail to understand there is a lack of confidence in my intentions about the book's political content." The Cubans are no slouches at the intelligence game.

Whatever Agee's reasons for writing it, *DIA Diary* is an interesting, informative and well-paced book. The book proves that the CIA does what it is supposed to do, and does it very well.

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